

TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT HOUSES.

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SIX RESIDENCES.

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SOME INTERESTING HISTORICAL NOTES.(By J. Moore-Robinson, F.R.G.S.)  
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Tasmania has had first and last, no fewer than six Governor's residences, one of which was not completed.

The first Government House was erected by Lieutenant John Bowen, who arrived at Risdon with the ships Lady Nelson and Albion in 1803, the first-named arriving at Risdon on Thursday, September 8th, and the Albion which had Lieutenant Bowen on board, anchoring at Risdon Creek on Sunday September 11th, 1803. Bowen immediately made arrangements for landing, constructing a little later the stone steps on the North side of Risdon Creek, which still exist just below where the Centenary Obelisk was placed in September 1903. Bowen lived on board the Albion until his quarters were ready for occupancy. These were constructed on top of the rise to the Eastward of the landing place, and some portions of Bowen's original house, the first Government House of Tasmania still exist, being incorporated in the wellknown farm house built on the hill.

THE SECOND GOVERNMENT HOUSE.

In February 1804 Colonel Collins arrived in the Derwent, and

subsequently took over the command of the small and somewhat insubordinate establishment which had been in existence for the previous six months, under the command of Lieutenant Bowen. On February 21, 1804, Collins warped his two ships, the Ocean and the Lady Nelson, to the then existing Hunter Island, which occupied the place on which the inner end of Ocean Pier is now. A canvas marquee was erected for the Governor on the sloping ground which then existed as a peninsula between the foreshore of the Cove and the Hobart Rivulet. The foreshore was approximately where the inner end of Constitution Dock now is. The situation of this tent was nearly opposite the end of where Argyle Street is now, in Macquarie Street, and approximately where the porch of the Town Hall stands. This marquee was the second Government House.

#### THIRD GOVERNMENT HOUSE.

Within eighteen months, Collins had constructed a rough building to take the place of his canvas abode. It was situated close by where the marquee had stood, but a little to the westward, nearer to where Franklin Square was placed later. It was probably the second building of a quasi-permanent nature erected, Lieutenant Edward Lord's being reputedly the first. Lord's residence was about the rear of Dr. Crowther's residence, ("Coreen") and about midway between Macquarie and Collins Streets, and at the same distance from Harrington Street. Collins laid out a Royal Marine Barracks Square, which occupied all Murray Street



in front of the Orient Hotel, and the whole of the Cathedral site, the Northermost corner of the Square extending into Collins Street. The military officers' quarters were on the site of the existing statue to Dr. Crowther in Franklin Square. The powder magazine was on the foreshore, where the rear of Gibson's Flour Mills is at present, and a church of the roughest design was erected on the site now occupied in Old St David's Cemetary, by Governor Collins' tomb.

This old Government House was described by Bligh in 1809 as being of "the most miserable description" and was denounced in equally scathing terms by Governor Macquarie in 1811, when he paid his first visit to Tasmania, and laid down the plan of the present Capital. It is difficult to discriminate chronologically as to the buildings of this period, and the above description must be taken to represent the growth and development of Hobart from its foundation in February 1804 to the period of Macquarie's visit in 1811.

#### FOURTH GOVERNMENT HOUSE.

With the arrival of Governor Thomas Davey on February 4, 1813, a new Government House was projected. It formed part of a plan formulated by Davey for the erection of several of the more important public buildings, including the old Hobart Gaol at the corner of Murray and Macquarie Streets, old St. David's Church on the site of the present Cathedral, a Treasury building

lower down Macquarie Street, and a hospital more or less on the existing site of the Hobart General Hospital. In 1814 Davey began the erection of his Government House, which was again a little to the westward of Collins' House, and as nearly as possible on what is now Elizabeth Street south of the Macquarie Street alignment. It should be remembered in those days there was no Franklin Square and no Town Hall, and Elizabeth Street ended where it joined Macquarie Street. Davey continued the building, as did his successor Colonel William~~x~~ Sorell, who occupied the finished house on October 4th, 1817, six months after his arrival in Tasmania. This building subjected to many additions and alterations, lasted the Governors of Tasmania up to 1858, when on Governor Fox Young leaving it to occupy the present Government House it became derelict. It was sold on April 20th, 1859. In its most complete form it extended over the greater portion of what is now Franklin Square. Its central front was exactly opposite the old Guard Work at the corner of Macquarie and Elizabeth Streets, which is still standing. The great Ball room was at one end of the building, and was occupied subsequent to the Governor's departure as Municipal offices by the newly formed Hobart Municipality. A verandah in front was 133 feet long, and the Governor's offices, including his private office, his Secretary's office, and the chamber in which sat the old supreme body, the Executive Council, were on the western end



of the block, approximately where the Franklin statue now stands. The stables occupied a place about where the Deeds Office now faces Franklin Square, and the ground of Government House extended across Davey Street to the foreshore, the Governor having a private wharf about where Tolman's Woodyard now is. Recently the plan of this, the fourth Government House, as it assumed its final stage, have been discovered in the Architectural Branch of the Public Works Department. It is interesting to note that in the Executive Council Chamber of this House were placed the exhibits which formed the nucleus of the Tasmanian Museum. This was in 1848, prior to a room being obtained for the Royal Society and Museum, in the building which still stands on the western side of Harrington Street, just below the intersection of Macquarie Street. This old Government House was occupied successively and in its several different forms by Sorell, Arthur, Snodgrass, Franklin, Wilmot, Latrobe, Denison, and Fox Young.

Melville in his "History of V.D.L." (London 1835 page 38) states that the erection of a splendid Government House was contemplated. He adds somewhat ambiguously, that although the scheme was abandoned "in the Government Domain the remains of the foundation are still visible"

#### FIFTH GOVERNMENT HOUSE.

From incidental reference in correspondence it would appear that several plans of a Government House on the existing site in

the Government Gardens (Domain) has been considered by the authorities. On July 20, 1841, tentative plans were submitted to the Governor, Sir John Franklin, and approved by him on that date. On August 2, 1841, Captain Alexander Cheyne informed the Colonial Secretary (Mr. W.H. Hamilton) that he was preparing stone work for the foundation of Government House. On August 26, of the same year, Sir John Franklin issued a memorandum stating that he had measured the old Government House, and found the verandah to be 133 feet long, and the offices of the Legislative Council chamber 74 feet 9 inches long, giving a total frontage of 207 feet 9 inches. He expressed the opinion that the frontage of the new Government House, in order to provide sufficient accomodation should have a frontage of not less than 200 feet. On this information Mr. James Blackburn, architect of New Town, was instructed to increase the frontage of an existing plan, but on August 27, he submitted a design for a Government House having a frontage of 160 feet only, with two sides of 148 feet. He prepared these plans under an agreement by which he was to receive £42 for the general design, and if this was approved to supply working drawings for a further sum of £63. These plans were submitted by Mr. Blackburn on September 3, 1841, with an approximate estimate that the building would cost £14,000. He described the building as being in three blocks, and ornate in design.

Apparently the house was considered to be not large enough, and Blackburn submitted designs for an enlarged house, which were approved by Franklin on January, 1, 1842. Accordingly Blackburn entered into a detailed estimate, which he submitted



on January 15, 1842, and worked out the cost at £14,592/18/1. He estimated that 59 mechanics and 87 labourers would be required for three years to complete the building. In this estimate, Mr. Blackburn acknowledges the considerable assistance and many suggestions made by Captain Swanson. On his plans being adopted by Franklin, he was rewarded an increase of emolument to £73/10/-, and Major Kelsall was to superintend the work, with Blackburn as "Directing Superintendent" at a salary of £250 per annum. On March 10, 1842, Sir John Franklin in Executive Council, approved of the arrangements and arranged that "slates, chimney pieces, grates, ironwork, hinges, locks", etc. should be ordered from England. These proposals were accepted by Mr. Blackburn on March 14th, in a letter addressed to Mr. G.W.T. Boyes, Colonial Secretary. During that month arrangements were made for the flooring joists, boards, and other timbers to be obtained from the Government sawing establishment at Southport. By instructions by the Colonial Secretary April 9, 1842, Mr. Seabrook was appointed foreman of works at a salary of £150 per annum.

A supply of fresh water for building purposes was made the subject of tender, and five tenders were received. On April 13, 1842, the Colonial Secretary accepted the tender of Mr. Frederick Smith for the supply of 220 gallons of water per day to the building at 2/6d. per diem. A shed for the use of the stone cutters was erected with the approval of the Governor given on

April 18th, 1842, 2000 feet of boards and 400 feet of quartering being procured for this purpose at a cost of £10. On April 22, 1842, stone lime was tendered for, and Mr Allen's tender at 6d. per bushel was accepted by the Governor on the recommendation of Mr. W. Poord, Clerk of Works. During April, Mr Blackburn pointed out the necessity of employing a good working stonemason, free, and pointed out that such a person could be obtained from 48/- to 50/- per week, and recommended Alexander "arden's appointment at 50/- per week. This was approved by the Governor. Three stonecutters, William Strutt, George Strutt and Jonathan Bell, were subsequently appointed at 8/- per diem, and Garden made Foreman Builder at 8/4d. per diem, as from May 7th. Subsequently other free labourers were appointed at about the same rates of pay.

Difficulty was experienced in obtaining all the timber from Southport, and on June 27, 1842, Captain Booth, Commandant at Port Arthur, accepted the responsibility of providing the necessary timber from that station. In July a short railway was laid in order to convey stone from the quarry to the site of Government House. In August, the Director of Public Works Mr William Forder Kay arranged for the supply of bricks, which were burnt at water's edge from clay obtained on the spot.

Up to this point the work appears to have been carried on under the direction of Major Kelsall and Mr Blackburn. On July 29, 1842, Governor Franklin instructed Mr Blackburn to forward to the Director of Public Works the plans and designs "to enable that officer to take charge of the work as coming under his



On December 1, 1842, the Governor approved of the purchase of 22,750 feet of cedar then being landed from the ship Caroline to the order of Mr. Downing, at a price of 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per foot, the total cost being £308/1/5 $\frac{1}{2}$ . It is interesting to note that one of the tenderers for cedar was Mr. Samuel Crisp of New Town, who offered to supply the best quality cedar at 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per foot. On February 25, 1843, the Director of Public Works reported that in his opinion it was not necessary to continue the services of Mr. Blackburn at the new Government House. In June, 1843, it was decided to teach boy prisoners their trade at the new Government House, and they were placed under the tuition of John Rowland, a free immigrant, as carpenter and joiner.

In a long letter dated May 2, 1843, Mr Blackburn sets out in detail certain indignities he had received at the hands of the Director of Public Works, Mr Kay. Among these he states that Mr. Kay pulled down some of the walls that he (Mr. Blackburn) had erected and filled up excavations apparently with the object of building the house on a new design. In October 1843, work at Government House was discontinued, and the senior mechanics transferred <sup>to</sup> the work of building the Bridge in Harrington Street across the new rivulet. From a letter signed by Governor Eardley-Wilmott, who in the meantime had assumed the government, and who wrote in April 1844, it would appear that he was responsible for the instruction to discontinue the building.

This letter states that a despatch had been received from Lord Stanley dated September 10, 1843, in which the Governor was instructed "to suspend all operations beyond what may be necessary to prevent injury to the works already in progress." With a view to preventing injury the Governor instructed that a rail fence be erected round the discontinued work at Government House.

SIXTH GOVERNMENT HOUSE.

The work having thus surceased in that attempt, which up to then has cost £2969/1/5, the erection of Government House remained in abeyance until 1855, when a new plan in a different style of architecture was adopted. I regret that I am not at present in possession of official details of building the new house such as are available in connection with the building of 1841. On March 10, 1853, the Colonial Secretary stated in the Legislative Council, and in reply to a question, that the sum of £5,000 had been voted towards the erection of the new Government House, and that the work had been started and that prison labour would be used to a small extent, but not charged for. In a return contained in the Legislative Council journals volume 9, 1863, paper No. 3, "Public Building Expenditure" it is set out that 20 Vict. No. 20, approved a sum of £20,000 for the new Government House, and 22 Vict. No. 36, a further £20,000.



An excess of £183/7/2 was incurred, together with Departmental expenditure amounting to £730. The balance of cost was provided after sale of surplus stores by a supplementary land fund estimate in 1859. The total cost of the existing Government House, including furniture, decorations, clock etc., amounted to £67,872/8/8. The whole of this amount was covered by parliamentary votes. (see Legislative Council Journals 1863, paper No. 3, page 7.)

In a return (Paper No. 37, L.C. Papers and Proceedings 1855) issued by the Public Works Department dated August 2, 1855, the Director of Public Works stated that the existing Government House was started on a plan less expensive in style of architecture as compared with Mr. Blackburn's design, and that work on this new plan was commenced in 1853. The materials obtained by Mr Blackburn and placed in the basement storey were used in the present building. Between the middle of 1853 and August 1855, the cost had been as follows :-

1853, £735/19/8; 1854, £4,295/9/1; 1855 £3,182 (to June) total £8,213/8/9. To this has to be added the cost of the imported and other materials in the period 1853-1855, £5089/16/-, total £13,303/4/9.

The whole of these costs were charged to Free labour and material. A certain amount of prison labour was used, but it was not charged for, the only cost under that heading being for superintendence.

In the same return Mr. Kay estimated that the probable cost of completing Government House, including furnishing, laying on of water and gas, and arrangement of grounds, would be £46,249/14/6. He expressed the belief that the building would be entirely completed by the end of 1857, and this forecast was remarkably correct seeing that Governor Fox Young occupied the new and present Government House on January 2, 1858.

On February 16th, 1857, the Director of Public Works submitted a further estimate and statement of accounts. These indicated that the total expenditure to December 31st, 1856, was £28,150/13/2, that the January 1857 wages expenditure would be £769/17/-, and that a further sum of £30,531/10/1 would be required to complete the work, making a total then of £59452,-/3. It is thus seen that the estimate had been increased in one year by £13,203/5/9.

An illuminating statement was made to Parliament in 1857 indicating the method by which the money was to be raised. This is set out in Paper No.18, L.C. Journals 1856. It provided for the proposed sale of ground~~x~~ "on the site of the present Government House" and (this is referring to Franklin Square and its environments) including frontages to Macquarie, Argyle, Elizabeth, Murray, Morrison Streets and Franklin Wharf.



It was estimated that these lands on being sold would return £47,645. The return stated that land had already been sold on Franklin Wharf for an amount totalling £20,222/17/11. The historian, Fenton, ("History of Tasmania", page 331) states that the total cost of Government House "was something like £120,000. Probably a good deal of confusion has been created in the minds of writers by the transfer of proceeds of land sales, and the proposal to write off the value of the site on which old Government House stood (other than those portions of the site which had already been sold) as against the total cost of Government House. Clearly Fenton's estimate is entirely wrong, as there is no doubt that the return presented to Parliament in 1863 and referred to above is the correct amount of the actual expenditure. There have also been suggestions that Government House was built at Imperial expense, and was never properly transferred to the State of Tasmania. This statement is also incorrect. No Imperial Funds were used in the construction of the House, and the only contribution from this source which may be at all considered is the labor of prisoners, which was used to a comparatively small extent, but which was not charged for. This practice was in accordance with the usual method by which the labour of prisoners was allocated to Tasmanian Public Works.

It remains only to be added that the plans of the existing building were prepared by Mr W.P. Kay, Director of Public Works, who used the sub-structure already in existence under Mr.

Blackburn's plans. The building is Tudor-Gothic in style. It contains 70 rooms. The Ball Room is 80 feet by 30 feet, and the Drawing room alongside is 44 feet by 27 feet, the two being divided by sliding doors. Eight hundred guests have danced in the two rooms with convenience, although one thousand have actually attended a Ball at Government House. The foreman of the building was Mr. McCracken, whose well worn plans are still in the possession of the Public Works Department. The whole of the stone was obtained from the two quarries, one of which is now a lake in Government House grounds, and the other is in the existing site of Beaumaris Zoo. The total cost of materials imported was £5,089/16/0. There are 67 acres of grounds attached, of which at the time Government House was first occupied 34 acres were in grass, 4 acres in garden and orchard, 12 acres in natural shrubberies, and 10 acres in ornamental shrubberies. James Fenton, the historian, refers very briefly to the building and occupation of the house. The Royal Society's Gardens (Botanical Gardens) which adjoin, contain 24 acres. A former Governor allowed the Gardens Trustees the use of 1 acre 1 rood 15 perches of Government House ground.

It is interesting in this connection to note that the clock in the Tower of Government House is the first public clock imported to this colony. It was requisitioned for by Governor Davey in 1816, built to the order of the Imperial Government by Thwaites & Reed, Clerkenwell Road, London, in 1821, arrived in the colony in 1824, and placed in the Tower of old St. David's Church on December 30, 1825. It had one dial only.



In consequence of a public demand for more than one clock face, the Government of Sir John Franklin purchased two clocks from the same firm of makers at a cost of £300 each. These had been instructed in 1829. On their arrival in Tasmania one was placed in front of St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Bathurst Street, where it still remains, and the second was put alongside the original clock in St David's Tower. In 1843 the original St. David's Clock was removed and sold for £50. When Government House was in building, and a clock required, this original clock was purchased for £150 in 1855, and placed in the Tower where it also still remains. The second clock of old St. David's was left in the tower until the church was pulled down, the clock machinery being lowered to the ground on August 20, 1874. This clock remained first at Mr. Abbott's the Murray Street clock-maker, and later in the crypt of the Cathedral until 1922, when it was given by the Cathedral Chapter to the Church of St. Lukes Richmond, and erected in that building in the first week of November 1922.

*Original. Govt House.  
2 - Presbyterian Church.  
3 - St. Lukes Richmond.*